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G/TIP FOR STEPHANIE KRONENBURG; EAP/MTS; FOR JAKARTA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT RAMOS-HORTA CONDEMNS TRAFFICKING, ASKS FOR USG ASSISTANCE; FIRST ARRESTS MADE

¶1. (SBU) Following the release of the Trafficking-in-Persons report, GOTL President Ramos-Horta invited the Ambassador to meet to discuss the issue on July 1. Ramos-Horta told the Ambassador that trafficking in Timor-Leste is "totally unacceptable" and that forcing women into prostitution is "criminal" behavior. Ramos-Horta asked the Ambassador for USG assistance to address this issue while it is still in the early stages and before it becomes more problematic. Specifically, he asked for help from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigations and other U.S. anti-trafficking organizations in training Timorese law enforcement personnel and in developing "strong legislation" to combat trafficking. In addition, Ramos-Horta said that he planned to raise the issue in his July 2 meeting with Prime Minister Gusmao and to urge him to take forceful action to stop trafficking in Timor-Leste.

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador thanked Ramos-Horta for his attention to this critical issue and outlined the ongoing USG assistance programs in this area. In response to the President's requests, the Ambassador noted that we are prepared and eager to work with the GOTL. Indeed, the Department of State is now preparing to fund a project to help Timor-Leste develop legislation and provide additional training to law enforcement personnel. In addition, the Ambassador undertook to explore whether the FBI might be able to offer additional resources in that regard. The Ambassador noted, however, that training and legislation are not sufficient. The President agreed that more must be done - "traffickers must be put in jail" and "victims must be supported."

¶3. (U) Separately, on July 2 the UN Police (UNPOL) and the Timor-Leste National Police (PNTL) conducted a joint anti-trafficking operation at a bar in Dili. As a result of the raid 10 trafficking suspects were arrested and 22 potential trafficking victims were freed and referred to the International Organization for Migration and local NGOs. According to the UN, preliminary investigations suggest that the victims were enticed into travelling to Timor-Leste on the "false expectation that they would be working legitimately as masseuses or waitresses. Upon entering Timor-Leste, they were forced to provide sexual services." These are the first arrests by Timorese law enforcement entities of alleged human traffickers. The head of the U.N. Mission in Timor-Leste told the Ambassador on July 7 that the arrests revealed remaining shortcomings in Timorese police capabilities and the complete absence of safe houses. All 22 trafficking victims resultantly were housed the first couple of nights after the arrests at a Timorese jail.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: This meeting is a clear indication of the high priority that the President attaches to this important issue. At the same time there is a perception that the problem is largely the result of the large expatriate presence in the country, although the Ambassador suggested to the President that domestic trafficking is also becoming an issue. The lack of detailed legislation on trafficking and prosecutions of traffickers should be set in the context of limited local capacity across the board. The G/TIP-funded projects here have been well received and are clearly having an impact on senior

policymakers and policy.

KLEMM